



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

*Ready for School. Set for Life.*

## COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

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### ***Background***

In April 2010, the First Things First Communications Division presented to the state board a Strategic Communications Plan for FY2011-2013. The plan had four major objectives:

- Ensure consistent messaging about FTF internally and externally;
- Position FTF as a leader in efforts to fulfill Arizona's commitment to our youngest kids;
- Build and drive support for investment in programs for Arizona's kids 5 and younger; and,
- Inform Arizona caregivers of children five years old and younger about early childhood programs and services, in particular FTF statewide initiatives and regionally supported strategies.

The FTF Regional Partnership Councils generously supported the FY11 Strategic Communications effort in a variety of ways, including:

- Support for community outreach liaison positions to target specific audiences with information about the importance of early childhood development and health and the role of FTF in helping prepare Arizona's youngest kids for school. Several regional council members also either are facilitating or participating in the community outreach presentations.
- Support for FY 11 advertising that included television, radio, cinema, billboards and newspapers.
- Proactive media relations to highlight FTF funded strategies in the regions.
- Purchase and distribution of Born Learning parent education materials to give parents and other caregivers information about the critical role that early experiences play in their child's early development, as well as useful tips and strategies to help support their child's early learning.
- And, the purchase and distribution of branded leave-behinds to be used as educational reinforcement when FTF was present at community events aimed at parents and other early childhood stakeholders. Many of the leave-behinds included messages that highlight what individuals can do to support healthy early development, and many of them include the FTF Web address for those who seek additional information about early childhood.

## ***Accomplishments to Date***

October marked the sixth month of implementation for the FTF Strategic Communications Plan. Examples of the successes achieved in the first six months of plan implementation include:

The **FTF Brand was refined**, including the change in tagline from, “The right system for better futures,” to “Ready for School. Set for Life.” The duties of Brand Advocate were assigned to a Communications staff member

for efficiency and consistency in brand application.

**FTF brand training was provided to all staff.** In addition, the training was presented to state board members and many regional council members at the annual summit in August.

The **FTF Communications Toolkit was developed and launched.** The kit contains all of the information – including talking points, fact sheets, templates and tips – that regional council members, staff and grantees need to communicate effectively and consistently about FTF. In December 2010, grantees will be trained on expanded protocols to ensure they are effectively communicating with service participants and other community stakeholders about FTF. And, by January, many of the tools will be on the FTF website so that state board members and regional councils can readily access them.

**Staff were identified and trained to do community outreach.** These staff seek out opportunities to present information about early childhood development that include formal group presentations, participation in community events, dissemination of awareness-building materials and media outreach about general early childhood topics and specific early education and health services funded by FTF. Within the first 10 weeks of implementation, staff had arranged 421 presentations, networking meetings or events with **more than 19,430 attendees** who learned about early childhood and FTF. **More than 1,400 of those participants signed up to be Champions for Children**, which means they made a commitment to take a specific action – such as scheduling a presentation, putting early childhood information in their organizational newsletter, putting a link to FTF on their website, etc. In partnership with Regional Coordinators and Managers, **22 events were held to present regional councils with their FY 12 allocations.** Those events included local leaders from various levels (state policymakers, city/county officials, school board members, etc.) They also resulted in significant media coverage (see below).

The **advertising associated with our public awareness effort was designed and launched** between June and September 2010. There were a **TOTAL of almost 237 million impressions statewide** across all media generated from the late summer/early fall media flight, including:

- Radio – 8,850 spots across 56 stations resulting in **more than 12.4 million impressions.**
- Television – 4,127 spots across 16 broadcast stations and a number of cable networks **resulting in 9.9 million impressions.**
- Billboards – 99 billboard locations around the state generating **more than 186 million impressions.**
- Cinema – 48 movie theaters around the state (667 movie screens), generating **more than 7.4 million impressions.**
- Newspaper – 169 ads in 41 newspapers, generating **more than 3.4 million impressions.**

- Online – Banner ads on hundreds of sites generating **more than 16 million impressions** and more than 7,800 visits to the FTF website.

To complement the advertising, **we designed and launched Ready AZKids.com**, a Web page that guides readers to information based on their constituency – parents and other caregivers; early education and health providers; business leaders, etc. During the advertising flight, **traffic to the FTF website increased by 50%**; the ReadyAZKids.com page was the second most visited page on our website during that time.

Our **proactive media relations** – which included statewide/regional press releases, media relations as part of our community outreach effort, as well as targeted media outreach regarding specific state or regional strategies, such as the Arizona Parent Kit – **resulted in more than 100 positive print or broadcast stories about FTF programs and funding** in news media statewide.

We **launched our social media effort** with the development of our Facebook page and Twitter account. By the end of October, we had almost **1,500 Facebook fans and 53 followers on Twitter**.

The Communications Division is extremely proud of all that has been accomplished in the first few months of implementation. We look forward to sharing additional successes with you in the coming months. In spring 2011, we will be conducting follow-up research to determine the effect that all these strategies combined have had on raising public awareness of the importance of early childhood.

**Liz Barker Alvarez – (602) 771-5063**

